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Statehouse hosts R.I. inauguration

By JIM BARON
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PROVIDENCE — Declaring that, "the signs of Rhode Island's growing prosperity are clear," Donald Carcieri took the oath of office for his second and final four-year term as governor Tuesday.

Joining Carcieri for the wind-whipped inaugural ceremonies on the gleaming white, marble steps leading up to the Statehouse from downtown Providence were the other general officers elected in November — Elizabeth Roberts, Rhode Island's first female lieutenant governor; A. Ralph Mollis, secretary of state; Frank Caprio, general treasurer and Attorney General Patrick Lynch, the only other officer besides Carcieri to be re-elected.

Lynch was pressed into service to administer the oath of office to Carcieri and Roberts because outgoing Secretary of State Matt Brown was on a family vacation, missing the final constitutional duty of the office he held for four years.

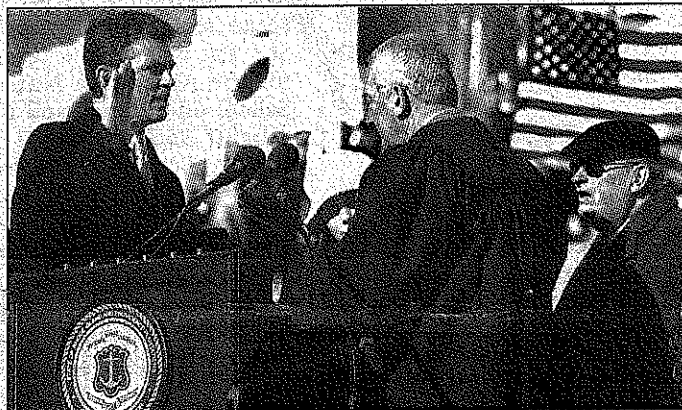
When Carcieri was presented with the ceremonial gorget, identifying him as the Captain General and Commander in Chief of the R.I. National Guard, it was accompanied by a 19-gun salute and a flyover by three helicopters and two planes belonging to the

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Photos by RICH DUGAS/The Times

R.I. Gov. Donald Carcieri waves to the audience after being sworn in for his second term Tuesday as his grandchildren share the adulation with him.



After swearing in the governor and the lieutenant governor Tuesday, Attorney General Patrick Lynch, left, is sworn in for a second term by R.I. Supreme Court Chief Justice Frank Williams as Lynch's father, former Pawtucket mayor Dennis Lynch, looks on.

OFFICERS: Take oaths of office around noon

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commander of the Rhode Island National Guard to earn her job, making her the only woman to hold statewide office in Rhode Island.

The Democrat is entering a political post that could offer her more visibility, but one that has few constitutional responsibilities.

She formerly designed health care packages at Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island and was one of the architects of a bill last year that created a cheap but slimmed-down health care plan designed for small businesses and workers who couldn't otherwise afford any coverage.

Roberts has promised to focus on making health care more affordable, and Carcieri has said he would be willing to work with her.

Tuesday's inauguration also marks the beginning of Democrat Frank Caprio's term as general treasurer.

Democrats outnumber Republicans by better than two-to-one in the state, but the party isn't always a political monolith, and the Caprio family has bucked Democratic leaders before.

Caprio, an attorney, formerly worked for the Republican governor at Cookson America. He entered the Statehouse as a representative from Providence in 1991 and was elected to the state Senate three years later.

He chaired the powerful Senate Finance Committee from 2001-02 but later lost the seat. Caprio has alleged that Democratic leaders punished him for backing a constitutional amendment barring lawmakers from serving on executive boards and agencies, a measure that Carcieri backed.

His brother, Rep. David Caprio, D-Narragansett, led a faction of dissident Democrats allied with the Republican governor against Democrat House Speaker William

Murphy, helping block a Democratic budget plan in 2004.

One notable absence this year is outgoing Secretary of State Matt Brown. The outgoing secretary of state traditionally administers the oath of office to the governor and lieutenant governor.

But Brown's campaign for a U.S. Senate seat imploded under a campaign finance scandal, and a spokesman said Brown would be on a family vacation during the inauguration ceremonies.

He is being replaced by North Providence Mayor A. Ralph Mollis, who won the secretary of state's race after a bitter Democratic primary. After he's sworn in, Mollis is scheduled to administer the oath of office to lawmakers in the General Assembly.

Attorney General Patrick Lynch, who will swear in Carcieri and Roberts, will himself begin a second term. His office won a public nuisance

lawsuit potentially worth billions of dollars against former lead paint manufacturers. But he was criticized for accepting plea deals from three defendants accused of contributing to a 2003 blaze at a West Warwick nightclub that killed 100 people and injured twice that many.

The newly elected officials plan to begin Tuesday with a Mass at the Providence Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul, where Catholic Bishop Thomas Tobin will preside and preach. A Congregationalist pastor from Roberts' church also will participate.

During the inauguration ceremony, Carcieri will receive a gorget, or a ceremonial neckplate signifying his role as commander in chief of the Rhode Island National Guard. Carcieri's office decided to delay the state's inaugural ball until Wednesday in deference to the funeral of former President Gerald Ford.